DOCUMENT RESUME

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ABSTRACT

Based on Machiavelli's book "The Prince," this lesson plan presents activities designed to help students understand that Machiavelli's enumeration of leadership qualities for a prince has always been controversial; and that leaders and followers may differ in what they identify as the qualities of a good leader. The main activity of the lesson involves students writing a compare-and-contrast essay in which they discuss their views of an ideal state leader and Machiavelli's views. It includes objectives, materials, procedures, adaptations, discussion questions, evaluation methods, extension activities, annotations of suggested readings and web links, vocabulary, and related academic standards and benchmarks addressed in the lesson plan. The lesson plan also contains a description of a video clip related to the lesson, comprehension questions related to the video clip, and answers to those comprehension questions. (RS)

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TITLE OF LESSON PLAN:

Machiavelli's The Prince

LENGTH OF LESSON: One class period

GRADE LEVEL: 9-12

SUBJECT AREA: World History

CREDIT: Summer Productions, Inc.

OBJECTIVES: Students will understand the following:

1. Machiavelli's enumeration of leadership qualities for a prince has always been controversial.

2. Leaders and followers may differ in what they identify as the qualities of a good leader.

MATERIALS:

For this lesson, you will need:

Access to research materials about contemporary leaders

PROCEDURE:

1. The first part of this activity is best carried out before students read *The Prince* or read about *The Prince* or view the video about it. Tell students that they will have an opportunity in part 1 of this activity to describe a good leader in their own words and in part 2 to produce a piece of writing that compares and contrasts their description of a good leader with the description put forth by Machiavelli.

2. Begin by having students identify positions that call for leadership—from leader of a service organization to leader of a country. Other leadership positions they may think of include these:

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- Spiritual leader of a group of people; leader of spiritual leaders

- Captain of an athletic team

- Teacher of a class of students

- Principal of a school

- Superintendent of a school district

- President of the student body

- General of an army

- President of a college

- CEO of a corporation

- Leader of a labor union

- Conductor of an orchestra

- Mayor of a city; governor of a state

3. Given that there is such a broad range of leadership roles, what generalizations can students make about the skills that leaders should have? Keep a running list of skills or traits that students think followers like in a leader. Some commonly mentioned skills or traits that followers say they like include these:

- Decisiveness

- Fairness

- Ability to bring out the best in people

- Willingness to work as hard as the followers

- Strong speaking and public relations skills

- Honesty

4. Now keep a running list of skills, traits, or powers that students think help a leader get ahead or get things done. Are some of the skills, traits, or powers on this list the same as on the preceding list or not? Some commonly mentioned skills, traits, and powers that help a leader get ahead or get things done include the following:

- Control of followers' grades, promotions, or financial situation

- A threatening personality

- Good connections with others in positions of leadership

- Powers of persuasion

- Trickery

- Competitiveness

5. Conduct a class discussion on the differences between the items on the first list and the items on the second list. Elicit from students that the skills, traits, or powers they may value in a leader are not necessarily the same that a leader thinks he or she needs in order to survive.

6. Proceed to your class study of Machiavelli and *The Prince*. After discussing the man and his principles of state leadership, ask each student to prepare, individually, a Venn diagram that shows the following:

- In the overlapping area, what both the student and Machiavelli think of as essential traits, skills, or powers of a *leader of a nation*

- On the left, what the student looks for in a *leader of a nation* but Machiavelli doesn't

- On the right, what Machiavelli wants in a *leader of a nation* but the student doesn't

Make sure students realize that the activity is moving from a discussion of leaders in general to leaders of a nation.

7. Using the finished Venn diagram as a prewriting device, direct students to write a compare-and-contrast essay in which they discuss their views of an ideal state leader and Machiavelli's views.

ADAPTATIONS:

Instead of requiring individual Venn diagrams, work with the class as a whole to develop a single, large Venn diagram on the board or on poster paper. You may also omit the compare-and-contrast essay.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. The program refers to Machiavelli's name as a synonym for evil. How accurate do you feel that assessment is?

2. Machiavelli said that rivers and men can be controlled, but cannot be trusted. Discuss what this statement means and whether or not you think it is true. Give another metaphor that would express your view on this idea.

3. Why was Abraham Lincoln cited as an example of a Machiavellian leader? How did Lincoln justify his actions? To what extent do you believe he was right to act that way?

EVALUATION:

You can evaluate each student's essay using the following three-point rubric:

Three points: Very well organized presentation of similarities and differences; highly unified and coherent paragraphs; absence of errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics

Two points: Well-organized presentation of similarities and differences; unified and coherent paragraphs; some errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics

One point: Poorly organized presentation of similarities and differences; paragraphs lacking unity and coherence; many errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics

You can ask your students to contribute to the assessment rubric by determining how many similarities and how many differences should be required in the essays.

EXTENSION:

Interview with a Leader
Direct students to interview a local leader, either an elected official or an appointed leader. The leader may work for a civic organization, a religious institution, a business, or government. Tell students that in the course of the interview it is their responsibility to turn the conversation to Machiavelli's advice for a leader. Have students report back to the class on whether their interviewees agree with Machiavelli.

Contemporary Politicians and Machiavelli
Throughout the video *The Prince,* the faces of modern political leaders are flashed on the screen while attributes of Machiavelli's Prince are discussed. Have the students review the video to identify those leaders and to note what attributes are under discussion for each. Then have students conduct research to uncover information about the pictured leaders. Does the information prove or disprove the attributes associated with each leader in the video?

SUGGESTED READINGS:

"Bill, Meet Niccolo"
Michael Barone, U.S. News and World Report, September 18, 1995

WEB LINKS:

Lucidcafe WWW Cafe and Interactive Magazine
This Magellan three-star site allows the reader to view information on many notables in history. Click to "Library" to find an alphabetical list of history's notables, including Niccolo Machiavelli.
http://www2.lucidcafe.com/lucidcafe/lucidcafe.html

VOCABULARY:

mercenary
A soldier hired and paid to serve in a foreign army.
Context:
Good arms are the arms of a citizen army not a mercenary army.

republic
A government in which power resides in elected officials.
Context:
You need to have a republic in order to have a citizen army.

steadfast
Not subject to change.
Context:
Appear steadfast, but remain flexible.

strategist
One who develops a plan for using the political, economic, or military forces of a nation.
Context:
He gives us the inner discipline of the strategist.

totalitarians
Leaders who subordinate and strictly control all others in a state or regime.
Context:
For some, it was a veritable guidebook for tyrants and totalitarians.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS:

Grade Level: 9-12

Subject Area: world history

Standard: Understands how European society experienced political, economic and cultural transformations in an age of global intercommunication between 1450 and 1750.

Benchmarks:
Understands significant individuals and ideologies that emerged during the Renaissance and Reformation.

Understands sources of military buildup of the 17th and 18th centuries.

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Video Information and Comprehension Questions

Video Description
Machiavelli's masterpiece of manipulation and political intrigue was written more than 500 years ago, but its principles still live. Politician Gary Hart and statesman Henry Kissinger, among other experts, discuss how "The Prince" has influenced world leaders and the course of history from medieval times until the present.

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Download Comprehension Questions & Answers ⓟ

The Comprehension Questions are available to download as an RTF file. You can save the file to your desktop and open it in a word processing program.

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TITLE OF VIDEO:
The Prince

VIDEO COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS:

1. What were Machiavelli's three rules of thumb for leaders?

2. What was the theme of Machiavelli's "The Prince"?

3. According to Machiavelli, if a prince wanted to play the political game successfully, what must he be prepared to do?

4. How could a prince be considered a political artist?

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The Prince

VIDEO COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

1. What were Machiavelli's three rules of thumb for leaders?
Machiavelli's three rules of thumb for leaders were: to act boldly, protect one s power, and appear steadfast, while being flexible.

2. What was the theme of Machiavelli's "The Prince"?
The theme of The Prince was the real nature of political power, ranging from the classification of government to advice on selecting staff.

3. According to Machiavelli, if a prince wanted to play the political game successfully, what must he be prepared to do?
Machiavelli stated that a prince must know how to fight and must be prepared to be ruthless and cruel. He must be ready to violate moral and religious principles when required, while also appearing to be compassionate, moral, and devout.

4. How could a prince be considered a political artist?
A prince could be considered a political artist because he was expected to bring order out of chaos and develop civilization from savagery, just as a sculptor creates a form out of stone.

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